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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR GERMAN ASSISTANCE IN TWO HUMANITARIAN REPATRIATIONS

REF: BERLIN 3707 04

1. (SBU) Post requests that the Department ask Embassy Berlin to approach the German MFA regarding a request for assistance from two German residents currently attempting to return to Germany from Iraq. (Post first contacted Embassy Berlin through the Department regarding these cases in the summer of 2004, but has heard of no new developments since Reftel, sent November 2004). All information included below may be passed to German government officials.

2. (SBU) SAID SEDAGHATI, DPOB 27 September 1983, Madrid, Spain: Mr. Sedaghati is the holder of expired German travel document No. 0683117, issued 13 May 1997. He arrived in Germany via France in 1990 at the age of six, and was placed in a private orphanage run by members of the US-designated foreign terrorist organization the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MeK). He was later transferred to a German government orphanage in Koln, run - to the best of his recollection - by a "Christopher Meertens", in association with the "I.R.F.K." agency. MeK representatives had, according to Mr. Sedaghati, ongoing access to this facility.

At the age of sixteen, in 1999, Mr. Meertens was removed from the Koln orphanage and sent by MeK leadership in Germany to Camp Ashraf, the MeK's headquarters in Diyala Province, Iraq. Upon arrival, his travel documents were confiscated, and he was told he would not be permitted to leave. (Camp Ashraf is isolated in desert which was at the time patrolled by Saddam's security forces, who were friendly with MeK leadership. It appears that Mr. Sedaghati, as a non-Arabic-speaking minor without documents or money, may have had no reasonable outlet of escape.)

Soon after the arrival of Coalition Forces at Camp Ashraf, Mr. Sedaghati approached Coalition Forces and asked for their assistance in his return to Germany, and for their protection against MeK leadership. He is extremely critical of the MeK organization, and blames it for his involuntary removal from Germany. He has had no contact with the organization since his appeal to Coalition forces in 2004.

For more than a year, Mr. Sedaghati has been living in a fenced camp, the Temporary Interview and Protection Facility (TIPF), set up by Coalition Forces for non-MeK members attempting to depart Camp Ashraf. Screening has not uncovered any evidence of his participation in criminal or violent activity, and he is not wanted for prosecution. He is free to depart Iraq at any time; Coalition Forces have retrieved his expired travel document, and can transmit a scanned copy upon request.

Mr. Sedaghati now shares an air-conditioned tent inside a razor-wire compound with several other men in his situation; Coalition Forces provide part-time paid employment, food, medical care, and some entertainment (satellite television, movie nights). Residents of the TIPF are not, for reasons of their own safety, allowed to exit the perimeter of the camp without military escort. Mr. Sedaghati has asked that we pass on his request for immediate German assistance to alleviate his situation, on humanitarian grounds.

3. (SBU) AZADEH BOUSTANI, DPOB 23 April 1977, Zandijan, Iran. Ms. Boustani is the holder of expired German travel document No. 0684057, issued 11 March 1997 and renewed 11 March 1999. She was smuggled by her mother out of Iran through Turkey as a small child, following the execution of several family members and the torture of both parents in Iranian prisons. She arrived in Germany in 1991, at the age of fourteen, and took up residence in Koln.

In 1999, at the age of twenty-two, Ms. Boustani departed Germany in order to visit her brother at the

MeK headquarters at Camp Ashraf, Iraq. According to Ms. Boustani, she was not aware of the organization's para-military nature, and planned only a short visit. However, her travel documents were confiscated upon arrival, and she was not permitted to leave. Ms. Boustani's claim that Ashraf residents found planning to depart were punished and threatened with death is corroborated by numerous former residents. Shortly after the arrival of Coalition Forces, Ms. Boustani and another female Ashraf resident stole a water truck and escaped the camp. Both approached Coalition Forces voluntarily, handed over the keys, and asked for assistance in returning to their respective countries of residence. Both denounced the MeK, indicated they had been held against their will, and requested that they have no further contact with the organization.

Since last summer, Ms. Boustani has lived alongside the TIPF in a fenced adjunct compound reserved for female residents. She is employed during business hours by Coalition Forces as a telephone operator, and has some savings. Like Mr. Sedaghati, she is fluent in German, does not speak Arabic, and has no knowledge of Iraq outside the borders of Camp Ashraf.

Ms. Boustani is a secular and, in her words, "modern" woman who is fearful for her treatment in an Iran she has not seen since she was a young child; she has repeatedly requested assistance in returning to Germany. She is free to depart Iraq at any time; Coalition Forces have retrieved her expired travel document, and can transmit a scanned copy upon request.

14. (SBU) Post and Coalition Forces have effected the repatriation of a number of citizens and former legal residents of Camp Ashraf to Sweden, Canada, Pakistan, and elsewhere. We work closely with ICRC with regard to onwards transportation, and are able to move both candidates securely from Camp Ashraf to Baghdad International Airport on short notice in coordination with ICRC if requested.

15. (SBU) We understand the natural reluctance of many governments to consider the repatriation or return of citizens or residents associated with FTOs. However, we hope the German MFA will give serious consideration to the situation of the two young German residents described above, whose association with the MeK appears to have been involuntary, who are not believed to have committed violent acts, who have taken the earliest opportunity to dissociate themselves from the MeK, and whose living conditions for the past year (tents in a fenced desert compound) have posed an extreme hardship.
Khalilzad